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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

CONTENTS

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN INDIA

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLICY COORDINATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

GENERAL DEBATE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN INDIA

1. The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of the members of the Committee, offered the Committee's sympathy to the Indian Government in connection with the recent earthquake in India.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. The CHAIRMAN said that the group of Eastern European States had nominated Mr. Rysinski (Poland) to the post of Vice-Chairman and that the group of Western European and other States had nominated Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl (Austria) to the post of Rapporteur.

3. Mr. Rysinski (Poland) and Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl (Austria) were elected Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur respectively by acclamation.

STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLICY COORDINATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the Second and Third Committees were the highest manifestation of the political commitment to development. They remained the principal universal forum for articulating the hopes and aspirations of all the peoples of the world.

5. The very concept of development remained a problem and it must therefore continue to be given careful thought. Significant gains had been made in all countries in terms of social progress, improved living standards and freedom. The immense effort put in by Governments and peoples had led to dramatic gains in life expectancy, maternal and child health, and education, but the gains had been less dramatic in the areas of food security, job creation, technological capacity, economic diversification and income growth. Many developing countries had managed to overcome the major constraints of underdevelopment and could now participate in the global economy from a position of strength. Those successes must be recognized in order to counter the defeatism and despair which had sapped the vitality of the national and international efforts to promote development in recent years. But if those efforts were to continue to work in the future, the reasons for the failures must be understood. In many countries the assumptions of the past were being re-examined. That was the case in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But everywhere the role of the State and the public sector was being rethought, as were the degree of openness to international trade and investment and decentralization. The industrialized world was also concerned about the long-term viability of its development patterns, given their impact on the environment and their social consequences.

6. The need to rethink development was due in part to the widening of the gap between performance and promise, the emergence of social and political tensions and also, on a more positive note, to the growth of a new class of entrepreneurs

activists who believed that they could do much for national development if the desired reforms were introduced. But the need also stemmed from the interdependence of the international economy as a result of the changes in exchange-rate regimes which had reduced the potential for independent action, from the growing importance of private flows of capital, from the globalization of production processes through transnational corporations, from the impact of regional integration and from the effect of international communications on hopes, aspirations and consumption patterns. Globalization and the redefinition of the role of the State were issues at the frontier of the debate about change. More traditional issues such as debt, trade, investment, money and finance remained relevant, but the United Nations approach must be recast in the light of a situation in which the role of the State in trade and finance was diminishing. But the inequalities of the global system remained; the crushing burden of debt continued to paralyse the development of the developing countries; the exceptions to a free and open multilateral trading system were more important than before; investment remained essentially limited to the already rich countries; and financial decisions were beyond the control of the weak. Yet the objectives of development cooperation remained the same: sustained and sustainable growth, removal of imbalances, and fair play and social justice, for globalization in its various aspects had merely strengthened the case for policy coordination at the international level.

7. The ideological confrontations of the cold war were over. There was a growing convergence of views on the policy framework required for development. But did the results measure up to the hopes? The only favourable signs came from Asia and parts of Latin America. Stagnation and rising unemployment haunted the developed countries, where globalization and deregulation had eroded the degree of control which the authorities could exercise over economic policies. In commerce there were increasing tensions among the major players, who resorted to unilateral action and protectionism, at a time when the developing countries were trying to implement market-oriented reforms and were looking to global capital markets for support. The developing countries and the countries in transition must not limit themselves to restructuring and reform but must actively seek to resume their growth.

8. The disenchanting policies of the past had also had serious consequences for the environment, while their impact on the problem of poverty had been very limited. The stresses on the environment were well known: climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, accumulation of hazardous wastes, desertification, degradation of land and water, deforestation, water scarcity and marine pollution. All those problems arose from the past pattern of development or from the lack of development. The answers would have to be sought not only in environmental policies but also in a basic reconsideration of economic and social policies. The symptoms of poverty were also well known: 800 million people did not have enough to eat; 34,000 children died every day from malnutrition and disease; billions of adults were illiterate; and there were 35 million refugees or displaced persons. Poverty also affected the rich countries. The answer did not lie only in welfare policies but also in a development policy which gave priority to health and education, decentralization, empowerment, employment and smallholder production. The difficulties were further aggravated when a natural disaster occurred, and in

(Mr. Desai)

that case as well it was necessary to think not only about immediate relief but also about the development strategy which must be implemented in order to reduce the risk of disasters.

9. The United Nations had a pivotal role in that process. It was the only global organization which had a mandate covering all the areas of development. Its deliberations had led to the drafting of development strategies for development decades, the formulation of Agenda 21 and the Cartagena Commitment; all those texts derived their strength from the fact that they represented a consensus among countries. But those main principles must shape the agenda of more operational forums, into which must be injected truly new ideas about policy formulation at the national and international levels. The real test would be their credibility and relevance in the eyes of national policy makers. And the United Nations had in fact so far played an essential role in the launching of such ideas as development assistance, technical cooperation, compensatory financing, trade preferences and commodity agreements, and more recently the idea of adjustment with a human face or the notions of sustainable development and human development. Those big ideas were developed at world conferences. The Earth Summit in Rio had been once such conference. But the notions of "linkages" and "integration" were not just buzz words. There was a real need to make integration an operational concept in working methods, in programme implementation and in the way in which people thought about the issues. It might therefore be better for the Second Committee not to limit itself to issues of trade, investment, finance, debt and the environment; the idea of the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions was central to the very conception of the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. But such integration must be reflected in the intergovernmental process. The Committee's agenda and reporting system must also be rethought. Concise and pertinent reports would enhance the framework of the discussions.

10. But policy development was only the starting point. What was needed was action - and not just a proliferation of meetings and reports but action which truly changed the ground realities. The world had high expectations of the United Nations, not just in peace-keeping and humanitarian aid but also in the management of the environment and promotion of human, social and economic development.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/48/250 and Add.1, A/48/251, A/48/252, A/C.2/48/1, A/C.2/48/L.1/Rev.1 and Add.1)

11. The CHAIRMAN, drawing attention to document A/C.2/48/L.1/Rev.1, noted the constraints faced by the Committee in respect of conference servicing. The general debate had been extended by one meeting; a full meeting would be devoted to item 92 (External debt crisis and development) and a number of items had been grouped on the basis of the proposal by the representative of Australia, particularly questions of development, environment and humanitarian assistance. With regard to item 154 (United Nations interim offices), he suggested a compromise solution of taking up that item on the morning of 5 November and taking up item 94 (Operational activities for development) on the afternoon of the same day; delegations would be able to speak on both items during the debate on the latter item.

12. Mrs. KELLY (Secretary of the Committee) indicated that item 91 (g) would be taken up on 19 November at the time when matters relating to the environment were considered.

13. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should adopt the programme of work in document A/C.2/48/L.1/Rev.1, as orally amended.

14. It was so decided.

GENERAL DEBATE

15. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and the People's Republic of China, said that the demise of the cold war had given rise to high expectations for peace and economic prosperity. The relaxation of old conflicts had coincided, however, with the emergence of new explosions of violence, attributable, in some cases, to ethnic or political motives but in others, to the extreme poverty in which millions of human beings lived. The problem of poverty was concentrated in the developing countries. Although the principal responsibility for remedying that problem lay with those countries, their efforts were not sufficient and, in an interdependent world, a favourable international environment, coherent economic cooperation policies and a continuous and expanding flow of resources were also needed. Yet the most recent surveys of the world economy left little room for optimism, since stagnation and uncertainty were the predominant traits of the economies of the developed countries; paradoxically, the growth of the international economy was largely attributed to the economic recovery of a sizeable number of developing countries. Several factors had to be borne in mind, however. First, many third world countries were experiencing a marked deterioration in their economies. Second, poverty and social underdevelopment was still a great burden for the majority of those countries, even those that showed signs of recovery. Third, that recovery could be stymied if the prevailing adverse economic conditions in the countries of the North remained unchanged. Fourth, the discriminatory policies of industrialized countries were continuing to obstruct the effective globalization of trade and economic relations. Developed countries should be flexible in their fiscal and monetary policies, and more disciplined in their exchange policies, and should proceed without further delay to introduce their own structural reforms, which were imperative for the stabilization of the world economy and the resurgence of global demand. The lack of coordination of macroeconomic policies resulted in uncertainty and imbalance.

16. The Group of 77 and China reiterated the urgent need to establish an adequate balance between peace and security policies, and cooperation for development. Without the elimination of disparities and with no development model that took into account the fundamental needs of the population and allowed for broad participation in decision-making, peace and security would not lead to the stability that everyone desired. Without economic and social development, democracy would not flourish. The issue of development should therefore be approached in an integral and comprehensive way. The Group of 77 would vigorously defend the initiative for the adoption of an agenda for development. The Secretary-General had announced that a preliminary report on the subject would be submitted; the consideration of that report would provide an opportunity for all countries to express their points of view on all the elements that should form part of the integrated approach to development.

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

17. Trade liberalization on the part of the industrialized countries was an essential prerequisite for the developing countries in order to sustain the growth rate of their imports, which had contributed significantly to the creation of jobs in the north. The Group of 77 was therefore concerned about the growth of protectionism in developed countries, including the adoption of unilateral measures that ran counter to the rules and principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Numerous panels of experts had censured those restrictive practices, but they were continuing to be applied. It was to be hoped that such practices would not jeopardize the conclusion, before 15 December 1993, of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations; the results of those negotiations needed to be satisfactory and balanced for the third world, which meant that the financial, trade and development needs of the third world should be properly taken care of. That was what had been called for in the Punta del Este Ministerial Declaration adopted seven years previously. The Group of 77 was concerned that the industrialized countries were interested only in resolving their own differences, and that a possible accord among them could be imposed at the last minute on the developing countries. It was only if the interests of all countries were taken into account that it would be possible to conclude a balanced, equitable and effective trade agreement. Further delays would seriously jeopardize the negotiations; a failure of the Uruguay Round would have disastrous economic and social consequences for the developing countries and could undermine the strategic reforms that many of them had been introducing in their economies and their efforts to consolidate democracy.

18. On the external debt problem, progress was still insufficient. For many countries, the situation had worsened. Additional measures were required to improve the management of bilateral debt in the Paris Club, including an expanded concept of eligibility under the Trinidad and Tobago terms so that a larger number of low income debtor countries were covered. The Brady Plan should provide more favourable conditions and broader reductions of commercial debt. It was difficult to understand why some industrialized countries were continuing to resist new initiatives aimed at achieving a substantial reduction of the debt of the poorest countries. Only energetic action that brought about a stable and lasting solution to the problem could lead to progress in those countries.

19. Official development assistance (ODA) had been reduced because the industrialized countries attached greater priority to their own problems, and also because of the increasing number of peace-keeping operations. Furthermore, resource flows had been mobilized to help countries with economies in transition, despite pledges that the transfer of such resources would not take place at the expense of the developing world. The tenth replenishment of the International Development Association was proving difficult and some external aid programmes had been cut, so that the situation in that respect was anything but promising. It was also regrettable that most developed countries had not reached the minimum target for ODA, which they had voluntarily accepted.

20. Agenda 21 could not be fully implemented because of the insufficiency of financial resources. Although the Commission on Sustainable Development had been established in 1993 and working groups had been formed to deal with the

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

subjects of finance and the transfer of technology, much work remained to be done. The current session of the General Assembly would provide an opportunity to review the implementation of Agenda 21 in areas of particular interest to the developing countries, such as the draft convention to combat drought and/or desertification, and the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Group of 77 and China attached great importance to the preparation of the International Conference on Population and Development, which would take place in Cairo in 1994 and would provide an opportunity to address the issues of population and development together. At that time, the sovereign right of developing countries to define their own policies in accordance with their particular social, economic and cultural conditions must be respected. The Group of 77 and China also attached great importance to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in 1996.

21. The Committee would also consider the problems of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, which required the continuous support of the United Nations system, especially through technical and economic assistance. South-South cooperation was not only a means of achieving closer relations among developing countries but also a way of stimulating the growth and restructuring of the world economy.

22. On 5 October 1993 the Group of 77 had adopted a Declaration by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member countries. The ministers had expressed their firm opposition to the idea of expanding the attributes of the United Nations resident coordinators to the political sphere. That type of initiative was liable to distort the legitimate nature of United Nations field offices whose functions were exclusively related to operational activities for development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The Group of 77 reiterated its firm support for all efforts aimed at reducing costs, increasing efficiency and eradicating corruption in the Secretariat of the United Nations; however, the assignment of political functions to resident coordinators had nothing to do with that objective. The political functions of the United Nations were governed by arrangements that were completely foreign to the issue of operational activities. The Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights were clear examples; each one of those bodies had its own mechanisms to deal with delicate political issues and representation in the field. The Group of 77 was totally opposed to the proposal to give political functions to resident coordinators on the pretext of rationalizing costs. Finally, it deplored the delay in convening the Committee for Development Planning.

23. In conclusion, he reiterated the firm commitment of the Group of 77 to forge a different system of international economic relations which would lead to the creation of a better and more just world.

24. Mr. BROUHNS (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, noted that the changes which had taken place in the international community since the end of the 1980s had created both economic and political uncertainty. For the third consecutive year, economic growth had varied widely from region to region. Even the industrialized countries were experiencing economic stagnation accompanied by a high rate of unemployment. Social issues

(Mr. Brouhns, Belgium)

had now become an important part of the international agenda, as was demonstrated by the decision to convene the World Summit for Social Development in 1995; the countries of the European Community were determined to address those issues and despite the difficulties which they faced, to bring about economic and monetary integration based on the Treaty on European Union.

25. The performance of the developing countries varied widely and the disparities among those countries were becoming more marked. In south-east Asia and in certain Latin American countries, growth was taking place as a result of both external factors and economic restructuring. In contrast, the economies of African countries were still marginal, particularly those of the least developed among them. In that connection, the General Assembly would devote part of its debates to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, a subject which was of particular importance to the European Community, given the Community's special ties to that continent.

26. For their part, countries with economies in transition were experiencing considerable difficulties in implementing the necessary reforms. It was important to encourage those reforms while avoiding social destabilization.

27. At the multilateral level, the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development remained one of the major issues and the concept of sustainable development was gradually gaining acceptance. The substantive work had been initiated with the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which had reaffirmed the responsibilities of States and recognized the needs in the areas of financing and the transfer of technology. The success of the Commission's work depended on its ability to remain a high-level political forum capable of mobilizing all those involved in development, including non-governmental organizations and grassroots communities. The Community and its member States wished to reaffirm the commitments which they had undertaken with respect to the implementation of Agenda 21 and would strive to ensure that the inter-sessional work of the Commission retained the necessary flexibility and dynamism. The Commission should not be a substitute for other organs and the creation of subsidiary organs, far from contributing to the realization of its objectives, would make the Commission's work more burdensome and less flexible. At the same time, in order to promote sustainable development, marked changes were necessary in consumption patterns and production methods, especially in the industrialized countries, which should demonstrate greater awareness of their responsibilities. In that connection, non-governmental organizations and the private sector played an essential role.

28. Since the rate of population growth outstripped that of economic growth in many developing countries, it was becoming increasingly clear that the link between population and sustainable development was the missing theme at the Rio Conference. The International Conference on Population and Development, for which the States members of the Community were preparing within the framework of the European Population Conference, should permit more in-depth studies to be undertaken. The results of the Cairo Conference would also have to be taken into account in future development programmes and strategies.

(Mr. Brouhns, Belgium)

29. The States members of the Community awaited with interest the preliminary report of the Secretary-General on "an agenda for development" and intended to make a constructive contribution to the debate on that subject. The challenge was to render the concept of sustainable development operational, taking into account the new priorities, namely, the fight against poverty, population questions and the refocusing of development assistance on human potential. Therefore, as the Secretary-General had indicated, the agenda for development should be a practical document and it should focus on the new trends in the field of development.

30. For various reasons, the United Nations system of operational activities was experiencing a crisis of confidence. It would function more effectively if it were based on priority options within the framework of a country strategy or country programme. The triennial review of the approach to operational activities should serve to enhance their effectiveness and credibility. The time had also come to ask other partners to assume a fair share of the aid burden commensurate with their economic strength.

31. The innovations which were being introduced into the multilateral economic debate would help to renew development assistance, including assistance within the framework of the international financial institutions. Multilateral assistance should be consistent with the administrative and absorptive capacities of the receiving countries. The error in many cases had been to focus on infrastructure rather than on human potential. While making those criticisms, the Community and its member States at the same time reaffirmed their commitment to development through both bilateral and multilateral assistance.

32. There was currently a need to redefine the role of the Organization in the economic field. The United Nations enjoyed a unique advantage in that it was the only universal forum in which political, economic, environmental and social problems could be addressed in an integrated manner. It would appear, however, that the debates in their present form were outdated and that the agenda was overburdened and too repetitive. Even though the debate on the restructuring and revitalization of the economic and social sectors was of particular importance, as were the review of the Second Committee's agenda and the new working methods of the Economic and Social Council, it must be recognized that there was a tendency to sacrifice quality for quantity, especially with regard to resolutions. A profound rationalization was necessary. In addition to the traditional debates, more flexible formulas, such as panels of experts, could facilitate and alleviate the Committee's work.

33. The reorganization of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors should begin to show results as soon as possible. In order to achieve that objective, the allocation of responsibilities should be clear to Member States and organizational charts should be published without further delay. Lastly, the documents required for the debates should be made available on time and in all the official languages.

34. The Community and its member States reaffirmed their conviction that the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of negotiations before 15 December 1993 was

(Mr. Brouhns, Belgium)

essential to the revival of world economic growth and should have a positive impact on the employment situation. They therefore noted with satisfaction that the Group of Seven had reaffirmed its political will to reach an agreement. It was now important for all partners to refrain from unilateral measures which could endanger the negotiations.

35. The economic measures, and in particular the structural reforms and the budget cuts which the industrialized countries had adopted, would, in the long run, help to eliminate imbalances at the global level. The industrialized countries wished to set an example and had taken a number of steps to eliminate excessive public spending and restore competitiveness.

36. The Community and its member States had on several occasions emphasized the fact that economic and social development were closely linked to the implementation of the principles of good government, democracy and respect for human rights. Their basic principle was that there could be no real peace without development and no real development without peace. Sustainable development was based on the human being but also respected the environment. Fighting absolute poverty, promoting the concept of sustainable development, contributing to the integration of countries in transition, and refocusing development assistance on human potential, were all specific tasks which the international community must urgently undertake.

37. Mr. ALONZO (Uruguay) considered that, in view of the transformation which the world had undergone over several decades, it was necessary to define the links between the political system and the economic system, both of which were crucial to international development. Working towards the same objectives and closely bound up with one another, each was a source of inspiration and motivation to the other, and at the same time they provided mutual protection and support.

38. Since the liberalization of international trade had become a fundamental element in the march of progress, it was the responsibility of the political system to make every effort to prove its effectiveness in addressing the aims of the international community; if it did not do so, it ran the risk of seeing a deterioration in its relations with other sectors, and particularly with the economic system. The private sector, for its part, supported the integration process, both bilateral and multilateral, and the opening up of markets, but it could only continue to do so if its needs were met.

39. The economic system inspired, nourished and motivated the political system, while both controlling it and challenging it to progress towards the realization of agreed objectives. It depended on equality of opportunity and it was up to the political system to turn that aspiration into reality.

40. Like the vast majority of countries, Uruguay counted on the opening up of markets and on integration, which implied interaction between the different systems. Despite the importance of the interdependence of world markets, however, there were those who continued to defend special interests and stood in the way of the march of history. It was, moreover, a matter for deep concern that specific sectoral and individual problems had not been defined from a

(Mr. Alonzo, Uruguay)

global standpoint. It was essential to intensify the process of integration, to open up the markets more quickly and to work towards equality of opportunity in the interests of the well-being of peoples. Successful action by the international community depended on the present generation's ability to think about the future.

41. Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland) said that the recession, which was evidenced by stagnation in the developed market economies and a deep crisis in most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, jeopardized the realization of the aims of the Charter, despite the hopes raised by the changes in the world situation over the previous three years. Only strong economic growth could help to rectify the situation. In that context, the conclusion of the Uruguay Round was of particular importance. An effective and equitable trading system which offered benefits to all, and respected the legitimate interests of small States would make it possible to envisage the creation of a truly multilateral trading organization.

42. There was a growing realization that international security was multidimensional. Security and stability were increasingly dependent on other than military factors: the elimination of poverty and malnutrition, social progress, environmental protection, democratization and respect for human rights. All those issues should be duly taken into account in the preparation of the agenda for development. That document, together with the agenda for peace and the agenda for human rights, suggested by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland in his address to the General Assembly, should constitute the three major pillars of the Organization's future activities.

43. In that context, the full implementation of the provisions of the draft resolution on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields was essential. It was therefore important to overcome the current impasse and to buckle down to the task. One possible reform might be the merger of the Second and Third Committees and a further integration of the social and economic facets of development within the Economic and Social Council. Closer links were needed between the latter and the Security Council, which might lead to the creation of an economic security council, as some had suggested. It was also essential to review the system of operational activities, to reach an understanding on reversing the current tendency to reduce the resources available for technical assistance and to bring about a unified United Nations presence at the country level.

44. The crisis resulting from the collapse of communism constituted one of the greatest economic and social catastrophes of modern times. If their reform efforts were to succeed, countries in transition, some of which had experienced a 40 per cent fall in output, needed a favourable external environment: lower interest rates, a reduction of indebtedness and greater opportunities for trade. The reintegration of such countries with the world economy was in the interests of the whole international community. The involvement of the United Nations system would encourage a stronger focus on the socio-economic aspects of transition.

(Mr. Mroziewicz, Poland)

45. Despite the acute problems which it faced, Poland was the most impressive success story of transition. The consolidation of changes, however, depended largely on the further integration of Poland and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures of political and economic cooperation. Poland therefore attached great importance to the association treaty with the European Community and to the free trade agreements with the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). It was also strengthening its ties with the countries of the Visegrad Group, the Central European Initiative and the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

46. At the same time his country noted with satisfaction that the changes that had taken place had not had any negative impact on its economic relations with developing countries. It hoped that the reforms which had been introduced would favour even broader cooperation with those countries.

47. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that, while his country welcomed the new prospects for international cooperation and the integration of the world economy resulting from the profound political changes that had recently occurred, he was concerned that economic growth had slowed down in most developing countries, particularly in Africa. The aspiration of societies for democracy and freedom should not mean that the need to satisfy other basic needs, such as food, housing, employment or an improvement in the quality of life and the environment, ought to be forgotten.

48. The problems faced by most developing countries, which stemmed inter alia from debt and the negative flow of financial resources, had contributed to the erosion of social structures and jeopardized the stability of the new world order.

49. External indebtedness and development financing, which were central to the concerns of such countries, required global action and special attention on the part of the international community, in particular creditor countries and the international financial institutions. There was an urgent need to find a lasting solution to the problem and to set in train a strategy to reduce the debt itself and the servicing for all kinds of debt and all categories of debtor countries.

50. The protection of the environment also called for a concerted effort. The major environmental issues, such as desertification, soil erosion, drought, pollution and the protection of wildlife and biological diversity, required urgent action on the part of all countries. Tunisia, while welcoming the new awareness brought about by the Earth Summit, called on all countries, particularly those of the North, to show solidarity and to place a responsible interpretation on the commitments it had made in Rio in support of sustainable development. In that context, it considered that priority should be given to the mobilization of additional financial resources to help the developing countries implement sustainable development programmes. It was important that environmentally sound technology should be transferred to such countries so that they could integrate the environmental dimension into their development programmes. He welcomed the spirit of cooperation and international solidarity which had marked the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its first session and hoped that such a spirit would be maintained.

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

51. The International Conference on Population and Development, which would take place in Cairo in September 1994, would make it possible to consolidate the emerging consensus regarding the need for more active international cooperation in that field. Thanks to its own coordinated population and development policy, Tunisia had succeeded in recording improvements in the main demographic and public health indicators, and in rehabilitating the family as a production unit. It had conducted exchanges and carried on regular consultations with the other Mahgreb countries on that topic. In that context, Tunisia had hosted the Mahgreb conference on population and development at Tunis in June 1993, which had adopted a plan of action on population and development in the Arab Mahgreb.

52. With regard to regional economic integration, Tunisia was continuing its efforts to strengthen the Arab Mahgreb Union (AMU) and to establish a regional economic community for the Mahgreb in concert with the other countries of the region. The Union wished, inter alia, to strengthen its ties with the European Community and with the countries of the Mediterranean region on the basis of a partnership for development. It was now time to make the transition from thought to action and to establish new cooperative links that would stand up to the challenges facing the two communities.

53. Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) noted that, as the United Nations approached its fiftieth anniversary, it was more and more in demand and that, because of a lack of resources, it was finding it increasingly difficult to meet the demands for its services.

54. As President Clinton had noted in his recent address to the General Assembly, the purpose of the United Nations was to serve people the world over. On the basis of that principle, the Organization's activities must be more accountable, better coordinated and more relevant. As for the Committee itself, its agenda was over-burdened. It should eliminate redundant and out-dated agenda items and focus on the concerns of real people. Similarly, the resolutions relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were no longer relevant since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had signed a peace agreement; those resolutions should therefore be abandoned. The United Nations should instead support that agreement by mobilizing and coordinating assistance to the new authorities in Gaza and Jericho.

55. The Committee should also adopt new principles around which to organize its work: sustainable development, humanitarian relief, preventive health and child survival, and expansion of economic opportunity. It would no doubt be difficult to reach consensus on those questions, but the Committee must agree on a set of reasonable objectives. The United Nations should concentrate on activities that it could do well and to that end it must "reinvent" the way it operated.

56. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had adopted Agenda 21. Through the recently created Commission on Sustainable Development, it had become possible to translate that agenda into reality. The United States had been working recently with the Government of Colombia on an initiative to advance the work of the Commission with regard to the transfer of environmental technology and capacity-building, focusing on concrete projects that could produce results of mutual benefit and that could serve as a model for future cooperation on issues relating to Agenda 21.

(Mr. Marrero, United States)

57. Population was another key component of sustainable development. The provision of family-planning services should be an international priority. His Government intended to participate actively in the Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo.

58. No matter how much progress was made in the field of development, humanitarian crises would persist. In that regard, the United Nations had significant resources at its disposal for humanitarian relief; given the magnitude of the problem, however, those resources needed to be deployed in an efficient and coordinated way.

59. The area of preventive health and child survival was of the greatest importance in order to secure a better future for humankind. It included efforts to combat AIDS, improve nutrition and eradicate communicable diseases. It was an area in which the United Nations system had demonstrated that it had a comparative advantage. Nevertheless, in that area, too, the United Nations could and must do better.

60. With regard to the expansion of economic opportunity, Governments were now coming to the realization that the most effective route to development lay in promoting the spirit of enterprise. His Government believed strongly that development should put people first. In many countries, however, State controls, senseless and complex regulations, and bureaucratic procedures had been established, property rights were not guaranteed, access to credit was restricted, and corruption was growing. Those were all obstacles which prevented individuals from realizing their dreams and their potential.

61. Concrete steps should be taken during the current session of the General Assembly to redefine the mission of the United Nations, reform its institutions and update the terms of its debates. The Organization could promote prosperity if it could emphasize results and efficiency over rhetoric. It should continue to pursue the steps it had already taken in that direction.

62. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) noted that stagnation persisted in the developed countries, where unemployment had reached 7.4 per cent of the working population. In the countries in transition, production had declined by 17 per cent, unemployment continued to grow, and social problems and ethnic conflicts had intensified. As for the developing countries, their performance was uneven: while Asia showed remarkable growth, economic recovery in Latin America was fragile and uncertain, and Africa continued to be mired in a deep crisis.

63. In Africa, per capita production continued to decline for various reasons related to demographics, external indebtedness, the deterioration in the terms of trade, natural disasters and civil wars. The end of the cold war would perhaps make it possible to reduce stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and non-productive expenditures, and to promote freedom and the general acceptance of market economies. Those changes, however, had also given rise to new problems, including conflicts caused by the dismemberment of some nation States, the proliferation of arms in various regions, the difficult process of transition in the East and the growing indifference of the developed countries

(Mr. Amaziane, Morocco)

to the fate of the developing countries, which were no longer of any strategic interest. In Africa, per capita GDP had declined by 1.2 per cent annually during the 1980s and by 0.8 per cent since 1990 and Africa's share in world trade had dwindled systematically until it was now less than 2 per cent. Moreover, the continent had the lowest standard of living in the world. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General had recognized that overwhelming reality when he had stated that "the end of the cold war had ended the competition to bring development to the world" and that the gap between the world's richest and poorest countries was widening amid general indifference. Morocco hoped that the richest nations would soon come to understand that their prosperity could not be guaranteed indefinitely in an increasingly interdependent world.

64. Turning to some of the major problems facing the international community, he stressed that all countries should adopt rational macroeconomic policies based on a sound fiscal position, anti-inflationary monetary policies, realistic and stable exchange rates and a liberal trading system opening the way for trade and investment. It was therefore essential for IMF to conduct more extensive and effective monitoring of the macroeconomic policies of the major industrialized countries. The developing countries hoped that the Uruguay Round would be successfully concluded, thus promoting the growth of the world economy. It was to be hoped that the major developed countries would resolve their differences and take due account of the collective interests of the international community, in particular those of the developing countries.

65. In addition, North-South financial cooperation appeared to be suffering from donor fatigue as donors, themselves victims of economic recession, became increasingly loath to invest in the development of the third world; official development assistance (ODA), which currently stood at $51 billion per year, represented only 0.33 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) of the States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while since 1975 the internationally agreed target had been 0.7 per cent. The developed countries should reconsider the situation and realize that the challenges of poverty, population, environment and the transition of the economies of the East were universal and their consequences affected all countries. They should not allow the unanimous political will displayed at the Rio Conference to be dissipated by the specific economic considerations of the day; the cost of inaction would, in the long term, be far greater than that of prompt action. Efforts should therefore be made to implement a programme of action for development which would guarantee a decent life for present and future generations.

66. With the end of East-West rivalry and the increasing interdependence of States, the United Nations was required to play a fundamental role in international peace and security, as well as in economic and social development. It would retain its credibility only by remaining a forum in which the poorest countries could voice their concerns. The reform of its structures and mandates should aim to transform it into a centre where States could coordinate their efforts to achieve the common goals of peace, justice and economic and social progress for all.

67. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said that in 1992 the world economic situation had on the whole improved slightly; the rate of growth of the developing countries had grown from 3 to about 5 per cent, while that of the developed countries had increased by only 1.5 per cent; on the other hand, the situation of the countries in transition had further deteriorated. The most encouraging statistics related to the economic performance of the developing countries. The Asian region in particular had continued to record a high level of growth. In Latin America and the Caribbean, growth had fallen slightly, but many countries, thanks to structural adjustment, stabilization, trade liberalization and deregulation measures, had managed to improve their economic performance. The net transfer of resources to the region had turned positive because those countries had been able to retain their creditworthiness. In addition, some Governments had launched anti-poverty programmes to alleviate the social costs of adjustment.

68. In many countries in transition, unemployment had increased and inflation rates had been double-digit or higher. Some of those countries, however, appeared to have entered a period of expansion and it was worth noting that they had all implemented economic stabilization policies and had endeavoured to strengthen their institutional capacities, to create small enterprises and to devise appropriate legal and financial systems.

69. Taken as a whole, the developed countries had shown an increase in their growth rate but their performance had been below their potential. Their major concern was the sluggishness of their economies and the growth in unemployment. Those countries should implement appropriate monetary and fiscal policies to achieve sustainable and non-inflationary growth and combat unemployment; they should also undertake structural reforms to improve market efficiency.

70. For its part, the international community should make every effort to expand its assistance to developing countries, focusing on institution- and capacity-building, with a view to promoting sustainable development. To that end, his Government had set a new medium-term target of $70 to $75 billion in ODA for the period 1993-1997, an increase of 40 to 45 per cent over the previous target.

71. In order to attain sustainable development in both the developing and the developed countries, it was crucial that the latter should maintain non-inflationary sustained growth and that the multilateral free trade systems should be improved. It was accordingly vital to bring the Uruguay Round to a successful conclusion before the end of 1993.

72. Of the world's regions, it was Africa which faced the worst economic and social problems. In 1992, civil strife and political instability had persisted in several countries and parts of the continent had been afflicted by drought. Economic growth and per capita output had declined; food shortages and inflation had worsened. The terms of trade had deteriorated markedly. The development of African countries should therefore remain a priority for the 1990s. In view of the critical nature of the problems in that region, the Japanese Government had recently hosted an international conference in Tokyo on African development, which the United Nations had helped to organize. Fruitful discussions had been

(Mr. Maruyama, Japan)

held at the conference, on such issues as political and economic reform, the usefulness of Asian experience for the promotion of development in Africa, regional cooperation and integration.

73. Moving on to the issue of the global environment, he said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) had provided a basic policy framework within which issues of environment and development could be addressed in a manner which would contribute to the prosperity of all peoples. The true benefits of UNCED would only be realized, however, if the international community succeeded in implementing the agreements reached at the Conference. Japan therefore welcomed the results of the first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development and looked forward to the forthcoming entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It called for increased efforts to complete negotiations on a convention to combat desertification by June 1994. Japan had been one of the first industrialized countries to ratify the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity and it was actively participating in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was determined to play a leading role in international efforts to bring about environmentally sound development through effective follow-up to the commitments made at UNCED.

74. The goal of sustainable development could be achieved only if there was progress on the issue of population. The International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in 1994 would be an event of great importance in that it would enhance global awareness of population problems and of areas where further steps were needed to solve those problems. His delegation hoped to contribute actively to the work undertaken in that context.

75. The Committee was to consider another important item at the present session, the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Positive results had already been achieved. In 1994 the Economic and Social Council was to conduct a mid-term review of the Decade. To that end, the General Assembly had approved the convening in 1994 of a world conference of representatives of national committees for the Decade, which the Japanese Government had offered to host in Yokohama in May 1994. The Japanese delegation would take an active part in the consideration of the item with a view to ensuring the success of the conference.

76. The question of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields had been considered in very great depth at the previous session of the General Assembly, and a draft resolution (A/47/L.58) had been prepared but unfortunately not adopted. The restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations must be attended to as a matter of urgency so that the Organization would be able to respond more effectively to problems as they arose around the world. It was therefore essential for the Committee to complete its work on the item at the present session.

77. Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICHL (Austria), referring to the question of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, said that it was disappointing that no agreement had been reached on draft resolution A/47/L.58, for its implementation would make a large

(Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl, Austria)

contribution to enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations, not only in the political and peace-keeping spheres but also in the economic, social and related fields.

78. The General Assembly had decided to continue the consultations on the issue of the composition and functioning of the various executive boards, thus creating a framework which should facilitate a final agreement, provided that delegations displayed creativity and flexibility. The Nordic countries should continue to play a leadership role in the matter.

79. Turning to the special programmes of economic assistance (agenda item 100), she recalled that at its previous session the Committee had adopted some 15 similar resolutions under the item. She suggested that interested delegations should meet informally to establish a structure which could be used as a general mould for all resolutions on special economic assistance, thereby saving time.

80. With regard to the debate in the Economic and Social Council on the follow-up to UNCED, her delegation reiterated the proposal which it had made on that occasion, i.e. that some time should be devoted during the consideration of item 99 to the question of sustainable patterns of consumption - a crucial and tricky subject which had not been studied in sufficient depth.

81. The report of the Secretary-General on an agenda for development was to be considered under agenda item 91, and it was to be hoped that the small number of responses received so far by the Secretariat was not an indication of a lack of interest in the item.

82. Mr. SAAD (Egypt) said that the new era which was opening with the ending of the cold war offered the world new hope while at the same time confronting it with formidable challenges. Egypt hoped that a new international partnership would be established, that cooperation for sustainable development and peace would be strengthened, and that countries would reassign their military budgets to the promotion of development.

83. The United Nations would have a leading role to play both in peace-keeping activities and in international cooperation, for there was a close link between international peace and security, economic development and the elimination of poverty. In that connection the Egyptian delegation awaited with interest the report of the Secretary-General on an agenda for development, which should serve as a frame of reference for international economic cooperation.

84. The stagnation of growth rates, the lack of resources to fund operational activities, the cut-back in aid to the developing countries, the instability of economic systems, the collapse of commodity prices, the indebtedness of the countries of the third world and the difficulties which they encountered in exporting their raw materials were all obstacles to partnership and international cooperation with a view to reducing the gap between rich and poor and organizing a new economic order without marginalizing the poor.

85. The restructuring of the United Nations should help to enhance its effectiveness without jeopardizing the transparency of its work or disregarding

(Mr. Saad, Egypt)

the sovereign equality of nations. It was important to relaunch North-South cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. To that end South-South cooperation must be encouraged by means of special programmes of economic cooperation under the auspices of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

86. The existing international trade structures were an obstacle to any re-expansion of trade and to the development of the countries of the third world. Those countries were finding it difficult to export their goods to the industrialized countries and were unable to fund their development and social programmes. The implementation of structural adjustment measures by the developing countries required increased financial support from the international community. In that context Egypt called for a speedy conclusion of the Uruguay negotiations and requested the developed countries to meet the commitments entered into at the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in order to establish for international trade a new framework based on equity. Debt was one of the main obstacles to the development of the countries of the third world. It was essential for the developed countries and the international institutions to find innovative solutions to the problem and create a new and more stable monetary and financial order.

87. Transfers of technology and their funding were an essential element of sustainable development and of the commitments entered into at UNCED. Egypt welcomed the results of the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the creation at that session of a working group on the topic. However, it was worried that the resources might prove insufficient to ensure the implementation of Agenda 21.

88. As current holder of the presidency of the Organization of African Unity, Egypt asked the developed countries and the financial institutions to consider the issues connected with the development of Africa and to help Africa to combat the poverty resulting in particular from debt, the collapse of commodity prices and desertification.

89. The convening of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development had been welcome, for it reflected the importance which Japan and the other donor countries attached to the question; it was to be hoped that the international community would give its support to the countries of Africa in accordance with the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

90. As host to the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in 1994, Egypt would spare no effort to ensure the success of the Conference and hoped that with a positive contribution from all Member States the participants would be able to prepare a clearly defined framework for action.

91. Mr. SINGH (India) thanked the Chairman for the sympathy which he had expressed on behalf of the Committee in connection with the earthquake in India. India was grateful to the international community for giving moral and material support to the victims and thus helping to ease their suffering. For its part, the Indian Government would do everything possible to render assistance.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.